

NOAA's Directives Management System
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Administrative Management administers and operates NOAA's Directives Management System. The system provides a uniform way of issuing and maintaining NOAA's policies, responsibilities, and procedures. Staff members listed below will provide guidance to you on the process.

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Introduction

What are directives?

Directives are authoritative documents that may be used to establish, prescribe, or modify

- basic organizational structure and functions
- duties and responsibilities
- authority delegated to individuals, including any limitations
- policies and procedures
- standards and methods

The NOAA Directives System is composed of various Department of Commerce and NOAA issuances that provide authoritative coverage of the substantive organization, authorities, delegations, and administrative policies and procedures of the agency.

The NOAA Directives System consists of NOAA Organization Handbook, NOAA Administrative Orders, NOAA Circulars, NOAA Delegations of Authority, and the NOAA Handbook Series. The System incorporates, by reference, similar administrative issuances of the Department of Commerce (DOC).

The NOAA Organization Handbook (OHB)

The NOAA Organization Handbook series documents management structure and organizational arrangements within NOAA organizations and prescribes these elements at levels subordinate to those covered in the Department Organization Order (DOO) series. NOAA's Workforce Management Office (WMO) is responsible for the OHB, including its issuance, distribution, and maintenance.

- DOO 10-15 prescribes the scope of authority and functions of the position of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of NOAA;
- DOO 25-5 prescribes the organization, management structure, and assignment of functions down to the Staff Office level and to the first level beneath each Assistant Administrator;
- The OHB supplements and extends the coverage of organization, structure, and functions that are in DOO 25-5 by prescribing these elements to the lower organization levels within Staff and Line Offices. The OHB includes a functional statement for each organizational element within NOAA, except that one

statement may be used to cover identical or very similar units within the same office.

NOAA Administrative Orders (NAOs)

NOAA Administrative Orders are durable intra-agency directives that remain effective until superseded or cancelled by an appropriate action. NAOs cover substantive program matters and administrative management policies, procedures, requirements, and responsibilities applicable to two or more organizations. In many instances, NAOs provide NOAA-specific guidance supplementing the administrative policies and procedures issued in the Department Administrative Order (DAO) series. NAOs also may be issued on subjects other than those covered in the DAO series.

NOAA Circulars

NOAA Circulars disseminate policy and procedural instructions for a limited audience or for a limited time period (e.g., policy and procedures for a new or modified program may be issued on an interim basis pending further program development that will be issued in an NAO, handbook, or manual at a later time). Subjects covered in the Circular series include, but are not limited to, the following:

- citing specific information such as the locations of all NOAA Conference Rooms in a geographical location;
- establishing short-term programs;
- establishing interim procedures and responsibilities pending development of the durable items and their publication as an NAO or handbook/manual; and
- revising NOAA's organization and related code structures.

NOAA Delegations of Authority

The NOAA Delegations program is the formal means for re-delegating authority specified by law or Executive Order, or that has been delegated to the Under Secretary of Commerce, or directly to other NOAA officials, via the Department Organization Order (DOO) series or the DAO series, including the various DOC policy and procedures handbooks and manuals. The Delegations program also may be used when re-delegating certain authorities that specify that their re-delegations be documented within the NOAA Delegations series. There are many other delegations and redelegations within NOAA that are not published or a part of the NOAA Delegations series. Questions may be referred to your servicing general counsel or to the Directives Management Staff.

Handbooks and Manuals

Lengthy and complex NAOs are issued as part of the NOAA Handbook series. To be a part of the NOAA Handbook series, the issuance must meet the same criteria as given for inclusion in the NAO series (i.e., it must contain substantive and durable intra agency policies and procedures, shall have broad application within NOAA, etc.). To be ‘sanctioned’ as a part of the NOAA Handbook series, each issuance also must be authorized and introduced by a separate NAO in accordance with the guidance on handbooks and manuals that is prescribed in NAO 200-3, The NOAA Administrative Order Series. NOAA handbook series issuances are extensions of their authorizing NAOs and, technically, the NOAA handbook series is an extension of the NAO series.

Distribution of handbooks and manuals may be limited, as determined by the OPI, to those organizations and/or employees involved directly in managing and performing the functions covered by the issuance. In some instances, the OPI will utilize a DOC-issued handbook or manual on the subject matter, augment or supplement that issuance with NOAA-specific coverage, and then provide for the interweaving of the materials to form a single NOAA handbook or manual.

Responsibilities for NAOs

The OPI is responsible for content of the Order - that means the material must be accurate, appropriate for the intended purpose and audience, written in “plain english,” prepared in accordance with NAO formatting requirements, and kept current. OPIs may wish to contact the Directives Analyst for suggestions on how they might check whether their documents are ready to be sent for formal clearance.

Proposed new or revised versions of the document are to be prepared by the OPI, informally cleared with organizations that will be impacted in a significant way, amended as appropriate, and then transmitted to the Administrative Management Staff in final draft format using word processing software. Documentation of the development process, and particularly of the informal clearances (e.g., significant comments and their resolution; listing of the reviewers, their offices, and an affirmative indication that they concur). These materials may be hard copy (sent via mail or holy jo) or e-mail forwarded to the Directives Analyst. Materials will be included as part of the official and permanent file maintained by the Administrative Management Staff. When forwarding the documentation of informal clearance, be sure to include a statement that all significant comments have been incorporated or addressed and that there are no *outstanding issues*.

Notes on *informal* clearance:

- Counterpart clearance with DOC organizations is no longer required for informal clearance. However, in some instances the OPI organization may wish to offer the

DOC entity the opportunity to review and comment. The OPI must ensure that the NAO neither repeats nor contradicts existing DOC policy and procedural requirements.

- Review by Administrative Support Center (ASC) organizations should be accomplished as a part of informal clearance process if the ASC organization might be impacted by new or revised policy and/or procedural requirements, etc.
- Substantive comments raised during informal clearance process need to be incorporated, accommodated, or otherwise reconciled (see following tables) prior to the document's being sent to the Administrative Management Staff for formal clearance and signature.

The **Administrative Management Staff's** Directives Analyst will review proposed NAO for compliance with standards and protocols for formatting, use of "plain english," and documentation for use during informal clearance. Minor issues may be discussed with the OPI; significant issues will be discussed and, depending on the circumstances, may result in extensive consultation between the analyst and the OPI or even the draft NAO's return to the OPI for further work.

The proposed NAO and other clearance and supporting documents will be prepared for review and formal clearance. The package will be transmitted by the analyst, who will monitor progress during the clearance stages. Significant issues raised during clearance will be referred to the OPI; minor issues are usually handled by the analyst and the reviewer.

Once the signed NAO is returned to the Administrative Management Staff, the analyst will advise the OPI and take steps that will result in printing and distribution of the NAO, its posting on the NAO website, and the creation of the official case history file.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question #1: *I need to write a directive on a particular procedure, how do I get started?*

In order to initiate a directive (NAO) on a particular subject, you should reside in the office that has primary administrative responsibility within NOAA for the subject and you should be a person who has the expertise to answer questions regarding the subject matter. The office in the directives process is called the Office of Primary Interest (OPI). Before beginning to write the draft NAO, read NAO 200-3, The NOAA Administrative Order Series. After reading NAO 200-3, the OPI (originating office) should begin writing a draft NAO. The following outline will help you understand the steps involved in the directives process:

A. Informal NAO Process:

Action Step	Action Office	Process
01	OPI	A need to initiate or update a NAO is established by the OPI.
02	OPI	The OPI writes the draft NAO.
03	OPI	The OPI obtains comments/clearance from the proper office(s) within the OPI's chain of command (branch, division, office, line or staff office).
04	OPI	After obtaining comments/clearance from offices within the OPI's chain of command, the OPI forwards a copy of the draft NAO to other offices that might have a functional interest in its contents for review and comments. Special attention shall be paid to clearing the draft NAO with those offices whose responsibilities cross program areas. The draft NAO is reviewed for clarity, completeness, and accuracy of technical content, etc. Adequate time should be allowed for the review and receipt of comments.
05	OPI	Upon receipt of comments and recommendations, the OPI reviews the comments and incorporates them or makes other appropriate changes that will improve the draft NAO.
06	OPI	If any substantive comments are not acceptable, the OPI needs to inform the reviewing office that the suggested change will not be used and explain why. Hopefully, the reviewing office will accept the reasoning and provide its concurrence. If all offices concur, proceed to step #8 below; otherwise, follow the guidance in step #7.
07	OPI	If differences still persist, a higher level of authority should be consulted; an NAO should not ordinarily be forwarded to the Administrative Management Staff without reconciliation of all comments. There may be instances, however, when differences cannot be resolved between the originating and a clearing office. In such cases, the proposed NAO (or a decision paper covering only the differences) should be forwarded to the signing official, through the Administrative Management Staff, with an analysis outlining the nature of the disagreement and the logic or supporting statements of the differing parties and indicating that a decision by the official is requested.
08	OPI	The OPI then sends an e-version of the proposed draft NAO to Jim Arnold, the Directives Analyst, with a clearance paragraph that states the following: the purpose of the NAO; that all informal clearances have been obtained and differences resolved from offices that will be affected by the contents of the NAO; a list of the names/offices that cleared the draft NAO; and a statement that says this NAO does not duplicate any existing DAO or NAO, but adds specific administrative

		information for NOAA ?and its clients?.
09	OPI	The OPI forwards electronic versions of significant comments received and of final concurrences from the informal review process. [Hard copy materials should be addressed to Jim Arnold, Directives Analyst, Administrative Management Staff, Station 8626, SSMC4, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 3281.] The comments and concurrences will accompany the proposed NAO through the formal clearance process and will become part of the official NAO case history files maintained by the Administrative Management Staff.

B. Formal Clearance Process:

Action Step	Action Office	Process
01	Administrative Management Staff	Upon receipt of the items listed under steps 8 and 9 above, an analyst will review and edit the proposed NAO for format, grammar, possible conflict with other directives, and to determine whether further coordination is needed. The analyst may also advise the OPI if his/her evaluation indicates potential problems with subject matter coverage that could warrant further consideration by OPI management.
02	Administrative Management Staff	The analyst will prepare the NAO for formal clearance using appropriate letterhead and formatting. A Form 58-1, Clearance Sheet, will be prepared using the clearance paragraph developed by the OPI and some additional language adapted from the Order's Purpose section; individuals who will be clearing the document prior to its receipt by the signing official (or by NOAA ExecSec) will be identified on the Form. Background materials, which will include documentation used in the informal clearance stage and a copy of any directive that will be superseded or amended by the proposed Order, also will be included in the package.
03	Administrative Management Staff	The Staff will keep abreast of the status of the formal clearance package throughout the formal clearance process; any issues raised during the clearance that concern subject matter content will be brought to the OPI's attention. Minor issues will usually be handled between the reviewer and the Directives Analyst.
04	Administrative Management Staff	Upon return of the signed NAO, the Staff will advise the OPI. The Staff will then: type the effective date and date of issuance on the NAO; prepare NOAA Form 50-5A, Requisition for Duplicating Services; forward the NAO

		and Form 50-5A for printing and distribution; and prepare the NAO in html format and forward it for posting on the Internet.
05	Administrative Management Staff	Upon the return of the original NAO from the NOAA Duplicating Plant, the original NAO and a copy of the NOAA Form 50-5A will be filed with other appropriate materials comprising the official case history file.

Question #2: *How can I tell if there is a DAO on the same subject as the NAO?*

Where possible, the number assigned to an NAO will correspond to the number of the DAO that the NAO augments or supplements, although this is not always possible to achieve. There also may be DOC handbook or manual issuances that could cover the subject matter of an NAO - contact the Directives Analyst if there are questions as to other sources that can be checked within the Department. The Administrative Management Staff assigns a unique number for an NAO in those instances where there is no comparable DAO.

Question #3: *Is it necessary to format the NAO in accordance with the Directives Management System?*

Yes, NAOs must have uniformity of format and presentation, in addition to being complete, clear, technically accurate, and consistent with current laws and regulations. The OPI should consult the Administrative Management Staff if assistance is needed.

Question #4: *How do I cancel a NAO?*

An OPI may cancel a NAO by use of an amendment transmittal or through the Effect on Other Issuances section of the NAO if the NAO is being revised or replaced. Another alternative for cancellation is issuance of a Revocation Notice. Please contact the Administrative Management Staff for assistance.

Question #5: *How do I make an amendment?*

Contact the Administrative Management Staff if you need to make an amendment. As a general rule, an amendment should be considered when the change involves no more than one equivalent page in a five to seven page document.

Question #6: *Are there any other suggestions on what an OPI might want to do or to avoid?*

Yes. Remember, NAOs are printed on standard letter size blue paper using black ink - no color permitted. This also means that any exhibits or graphics must be large enough to be legible to a reader when reproduced, and they must be capable of being converted into html format for posting to the NAO website. While the headings of most Sections of an NAO are the OPI's to determine, there are two that are prescribed: Purpose, which usually is the 1st section of an NAO (NOTE: this Section must include a statement that it is a new NAO, or that it is a revision, in which case the OPI needs to state the major changes in the revision); and the final Section is always Effect on Other Issances. The Directives Analyst will be happy to provide other suggestions on what to do or avoid in developing and editing an NAO - and it is best to contact the analyst during early stages of the effort.

Directives Management References

NOAA Administrative Orders (NAOs)
NOAA Handbook Series
NOAA Circulars
NOAA Delegations
Department Organization Orders (DOOs)
Department Administrative Orders (DAOs)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletins
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars
GSA Regulations
Code of Federal Regulations
U.S. Code
Federal Register
Executive Orders
Bills and Public Laws